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SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL SPECIAL ENVOY CUMBER'S JUNE 6-8 VISIT
TO TURKEY

¶1. (SBU) Summary: Presidential Special Envoy Cumber underscored the need for cooperation and innovation within the OIC during May 6-8 meetings in Ankara and Istanbul with GOT officials, OIC representatives, intellectuals, and journalists. S/E Cumber explained his mandate and briefed on efforts to increase U.S. engagement with the Muslim world. Noting the slow pace of OIC negotiations, S/E Cumber solicited Turkish support for his initiatives targeting youth and women. Turkish interlocutors warmly received his messages and highlighted their efforts at OIC modernization. End Summary.

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¶2. (SBU) Meeting with MFA Gulf Department Head Ebru Barutcu Gokdenizler, S/E Cumber explained his mandate to improve relations with OIC countries and to address misperceptions of the U.S. in the Muslim world; it was not a mission to impose U.S. policy. Based on conversations within and outside the U.S., S/E Cumber reported he has worked with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to reduce unjust targeting of Muslims, especially regarding immigration. Gokdenizler, new to her position, noted S/E Cumber's visit occurred the week of FM Babacan's Washington trip. She highlighted Turkey's prominent role within the OIC.

¶3. (SBU) S/E Cumber provided an in-depth briefing on the proposed U.S./OIC MOU. Based on established OIC priorities, the USG has proposed working with the organization to increase cooperation on science and technology, education, and health. For all three issues, enhancing the role of women would take top priority. He highlighted a targeted training and apprenticeship program aimed at OIC youth. In addition, S/E Cumber briefed on a program to place virtual libraries with access to over 1 million publications in the OIC's ten poorest countries. Lamenting procedural delays in ratifying his proposals, S/E Cumber solicited GOT support within the OIC to encourage a more expeditious process.

¶4. (SBU) Islamic Conference Youth Forum for Dialogue and Cooperation (ICFY) President and Prime Ministry Foreign Policy Advisor Ali Sarikaya and Secretary General Elshad Iskandarov provided S/E Cumber with an overview of the their organization's efforts to increase the role of youth within the OIC. Comprised of over 40 youth organizations from OIC member nations, the ICFY is an umbrella NGO aimed at resolving the socio-economic, moral, and cultural problems of Muslim youth while promoting dialogue, civil society, and tolerance. Iskandarov explained that the OIC initially envisioned the youth forum to play a passive role and focus on softer issues such as sports. The ICFY, however, has actively endeavored to increase the younger generation's voice in all aspects of the organization, an effort that has met with resistance from the traditionally static body.

¶5. (SBU) S/E Cumber encouraged the ICFY to partner with the

Young Arab Leaders (YAL) organization headquartered in Dubai.

Noting that Iskandarov mentioned the ICFY would send a delegation to the UN in late-June, S/E Cumber invited the group to visit Washington and offered to assist in setting up meetings. He and Iskandarov agreed to speak later about the event.

¶16. (SBU) S/E Cumber highlighted the importance of science and technology, education, and health during his meeting with COMCEC Director General Ferruh Tigli. Soliciting Tigli's assistance, S/E Cumber encouraged COMCEC and the GOT to push Jeddah to support the U.S./OIC MOU. Tigli agreed to do so and highlighted Turkey's leadership role in the OIC and its efforts to modernize it. Empowering women, he underscored, is key to improving economic conditions.

¶17. (SBU) Fulbright Executive Director Ersin Onulduran reviewed the Fulbright program's success in Turkey, highlighting his own personal experience as a Turkish student in the U.S. S/E Cumber agreed that having a highly educated society was key to a sustainable democracy, as was the case in Turkey. Onulduran and Ankara University Theology Dean Mualla Selcuk discussed the function of Turkey's Religious Affairs Directorate, the struggle to define secularism, and the country's reputation as a successful democracy with a Muslim-majority population. Selcuk noted her department's interest in harmonizing Islam and the modern world, adding she will host on seminar on religious values and ethics in July.

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¶18. (SBU) On May 7, S/E Cumber met with Galatasary University Law Faculty Chairman Emre Oktem, Turkish Daily News columnist Barcin Yinac, and senior staff at the Islamic Research Center (ISAM), a dependent of the State Directorate of Religious Affairs (Diyanet). Oktem and Yinac applauded S/E Cumber's endeavors to counter misperceptions of the U.S. in the Muslim world, but expressed skepticism regarding his chances for success. Both interlocutors cautioned that Turkey was a unique case and should not be held up as a model. In discussions with the seven ISAM representatives, several of whom also teach at Marmara and Fatih Universities, S/E Cumber solicited advice on how to describe Turkey's role. The scholars recommended using phrase "the Turkish experience" when discussing Turkey's unique democracy.

¶19. (U) This message has been cleared by S/E Sada Cumber.

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